PROGRESSIVE STEPS IN EDUCATION

A partial report on
The Second West Coast Conference on Progressive Education, a consideration of the problems there discussed, and historical matter pertinent thereto.

by

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A Prayer for Teachers

By Glenn Frank

O LORD of Learning and of Learners, we are at best but blunderers in this Godlike business of teaching.

Our shortcomings shame us, for we are not alone in paying the penalty for them; they have a sorry immortality in the maimed minds of those whom we, in our blundering, mislead.

We have been content to be merchants of dead yesterdays, when we should have been guides into unborn tomorrows.

We have put conformity to old customs above curiosity about new ideas.

We have thought more about our subject than about our object.

We have been peddlers of petty accuracies, when we should have been priests and prophets of abundant living.

We have schooled our students to be clever competitors in the world as it is, when we should have been helping them to become creative cooperators in the making of the world as it is to be.

We have regarded our schools as training camps for existing society to the exclusion of making them working models of an evolving society.

We have counted knowledge more precious than wisdom.

We have tried to teach our students what to think instead of how to think.

We have thought it our business to furnish the minds of our students, when we should have been laboring to free their minds.

And we confess that we have fallen into these sins of the schoolroom because it has been the easiest way. It has been easier to tell our students about the motionless past that we can learn once for all than to join with them in trying to understand the moving present that must be studied afresh each morning.

From these sins of sloth may we be freed.

May we realize that it is important to know the past only that we may live wisely in the present.

Help us to be more interested in stimulating the builders of modern cathedrals than in retailing to students the glories of ancient temples.

Give us to see that a student's memory should be a tool as well as a treasure chest.

Help us to say "do" oftener than we say "don't."

May we so awaken interest that discipline will be less and less necessary.

Help us to realize that, in the deepest sense, we cannot teach anybody anything; that the best we can do is to help them to learn for themselves.

Save us from the blight of specialism; give us a reverence for our materials, that we may master the facts of our particular fields, but help us to see that all facts are dead until they are related to the rest of knowledge and to the rest of life.

May we know how to "relate the coal scuttle to the universe."

Help us to see that education is, after all, but the adventure of trying to make ourselves at home in the modern world.

May we be shepherds of the spirit as well as masters of the mind.

Give us, O Lord of Learners, a sense of the divinity of our undertaking.

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PROGRESSIVE STEPS IN EDUCATION

I.

A PROGRESSIVE EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE

In the middle of January of this year (1930) an educational conference was held at Pasadena, California, which may, and certainly should, prove to be a very significant event in America's forward stride toward a more perfect solution of the problem of childhood education. This THE SECOND WEST COAST CONFERENCE ON PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION had been preceded, as its name implies, by another one, held the previous year at San Diego. It was not my privilege to attend that initial gathering and hence the burden of the remarks made in this pamphlet will be based upon what happened at the Pasadena meetings. Nevertheless, full credit should be given to those enlightened individuals who started the proverbial "ball rolling" in the right direction, thus making the first and succeeding conferences possible. Their particular value lies in the fact that they bring together public school educators and leaders in progressive education (which is still so largely confined to private enterprise) in order to discuss the various phases of their common problem, than which there is none more important to be solved for the benefit of mankind.

Lest any one fail to sense the special significance of these conferences, it must be remembered that the Progressive Movement in Education had its inception in the growing revolt during the last fifty years among certain educators and parents against the type of education, its aims and methods, in vogue then and still so to a large extent. Very often, more often than not, those in revolt had to demonstrate their theories by establishing private experimental schools. But private schools are not supposed to be consistent with our national ideal of democracy and hence are at best merely tolerated by the adherents of our public school system. Thus almost from the beginning a wide gulf separated the progressive from the public school educators. And to have these two groups come together

again for the benefit and promotion of their fundamentally common aim is, therefore, cause for profound gratitude in the minds and hearts of those who sense the importance of **true education** in the pursuit of realizing our national ideal—**true democracy.**

At the SECOND CONFERENCE the subject for discussion was "What Is Progressive Education?" The important general meetings were all held in the auditoriums of public Junior High and College buildings from Wednesday evening to Saturday morning, January 15-18, 1930. The series was opened by that veteran progressive educator, Mrs. Marietta Johnson of the School of Organic Education at Fairhope, Ala., who spoke on **Education and Progress.** Mrs. Johnson was also given the opportunity to hold special classes on educational theory and practice. Those familiar with her recent book, YOUTH IN A WORLD OF MEN, will have some idea of the stimulating thots she presented at these meetings.

To one connected for many years with the public schools of Chicago and hence intimately acquainted with both the opportunities and the difficulties which a public school system presents in the adoption of a more ideal form of education, the subject discussed on Thursday evening, **Obstacles to a Program of Progressive Education in the Public Schools,** was of particular interest. These obstacles were divided into those created by

1. The Necessary Equipment and Finance, discussed by J. A. Sexson, Superintendent of the Pasadena Public Schools;

2. The Necessary Changes in the Curriculum, presented by Dr. J. A. Hockett of the California State University;

3. The Teacher's Problem, discussed by Madeleine Veverka, Supervisor of Elementary Education in the Los Angeles Schools.

It is beyond the limits of this pamphlet to give a complete or even an adequate report of the arguments pro and con made by the various speakers at the Conference. Mention will be made of only certain important points brought forward. And personal comments will be made by the writer in an endeavor to create a clearer conception of the problems involved.

Miss Veverka is herself a progressive in education. Hence she discussed the present inadequacy of the training given at normal schools; of the need of a better method of selecting teachers than that of the standardized requirements of a certain number of credits for subjects studied; and the need for a simplification of the curriculum and greater elasticity in the system as a whole. Interesting and significant was her remark that tho a change in methods might create chaos for a time, where all is now orderly and standardized by tradition, nevertheless such temporary chaos was sometimes better than the dead level of tradition. This idea has at least historic corroboration. Students of history and past civilizations are well aware that during a period of transition from one type of civilization to another there is very apt to be chaos, when the old crystallizations of tradition are being shattered and the new expressions of life are being born. The new life emerging, indicating growth, progress, must break the shackles of traditional authority, of the accretions developed by the previous cycle of growth, just as on a tree the new leaves must break the bonds of their protecting scales, which were developed by the old life of last year.

Dr. Hockett brought the obstacles presented by the curriculum sharply to the fore by contrasting the program as outlined in a city school curriculum with that of a progressive school. In the former, for instance, it is a more or less general custom to outline for the teacher just how many pages of a certain textbook she must teach during the year; and so, following that example, she knows with but a little calculation just how many pages she must cover in a month, a week. It will readily be seen that such a procedure places the emphasis in education upon the curriculum and the subject matter, rather than upon the normal healthy growth of a child. On the other hand a progressive school's curriculum consists, according to Dr. Hockett, of a succession of meaningful and wholesome experiences, meaningful to the child's mind and understanding, wholesome for his normal growth in body, mind and character. It is evident from this that there are no set pages in a book that must be memorized; no iniquitous standards or examinations are the goals toward which to

strive. And in creating such a curriculum, which is never static, the pupil is as necessary as the teacher, for these two together plan the curriculum; it is not imposed by authority from on high. Such a curriculum is a joy to pupil and teacher alike. Dr. Hockett aptly described our present curriculum as an "amorphous product of generations of tinkering."

Both of these speakers commented on the difficulty of adopting progressive methods because we ourselves—parents, teachers, laymen—are the product of the old system; we have been inbred, so steeped in the old ideas, that it is difficult for us to get the larger vision, a true viewpoint of the new ideals. He told of how we are hampered in the adoption of a progressive program by inadequate textbooks; legislative obstacles, as, for instance, school laws that require 50 per cent of school time to be devoted to the Three R's; also special interests, schemes of grading, marking, promoting—all laying their restraining hands upon our efforts toward greater freedom in education. When one fully realizes the restrictions these obstacles impose, one is ready to believe that even the license of chaos is better for a time than the continued deadening grip of tradition and systematized organization that has become unwieldy, hampering growth and progress.

The gist of the argument made by Mr. Sexson, whose position as city superintendent of schools should be a guarantee of the accuracy of his knowledge of the situation, was that the question of extra equipment needed for progressive methods of education resolved itself into a question of finance, and that finances really presented no obstacles, as there was enough money for the purpose. This may come as a surprise to many. Nevertheless, if the truth were known, it would prove no exaggeration to say that the money we now spend on education, **if it were efficiently and honestly spent,** would be sufficient to meet the needs of a progressive educational scheme.

The argument is often made that, because progressive school classes are smaller in membership—only about one-half the number with which an academic teacher, under the orthodox regime,

must struggle—that, therefore, we would need twice the number of teachers; hence, the extra expense entailed made the scheme impossible, or at least very burdensome to the taxpayer. An efficient reorganization of a public school along progressive lines, with some modification which is inevitable because of the greater number of children that must be taken care of, would no doubt require more teachers than are now employed; but I am quite sure that the number would not need to be doubled. And for the extra ones employed the money would be available.

A consideration here of the educational aspect of this problem may help to indicate the very vital necessity of a small class membership. A certain superintendent of schools was credited with the statement some years ago that "the education of the future must be diagnostic." Unless we appreciate all that the word diagnostic implies we shall hardly be able to grasp how radical this statement is even at the present time. The examination of children by scientific experts in education to obtain their I. Q.'s* and A. Q.'s* and other scientific facts about them is the smallest part of their diagnosis. To diagnose each child's capacities, his limitations, his latent powers, tendencies—moral, mental, physical—this means careful study of each child in close intimacy and in natural situations. Only the properly trained teacher in a progressive schoolroom can do that. It means a more flexible course of study; greater leisure in the schoolroom; less of the hurry and worry that our present methods and requirements engender; a smaller class membership, so that the teacher may give each child some of that individual attention so necessary to draw out the best that is latent within him.

Strange as it may seem this ideal is, to some extent, already in practice in certain rooms of our public schools. I am referring to those rooms devoted to industrial arts. The teachers of this department maintain (and rightly so) that they cannot give the necessary

*I. Q. stands for Intelligence Quotient, which may be regarded as a measure of native intelligence, that intelligence with which one is born and which ordinary experience normally brings into expression.

A. Q. stands for Achievement Quotient—the measure of a child's acquisition of knowledge gained thru study.

individual attention, nor present their problems properly, nor get a satisfactory response from the pupils unless the membership of the class is limited to about twenty-four, which is just half the number enrolled with the academic teacher. Hence, in almost every large public school, there are these small membership rooms, side by side with those that have twice as many pupils. Arguing on the basis of the orthodox curriculum of subjects taught, we have here an absurd inconsistency, and a situation that is topsy-turvy, as so many conditions in our schools are.

The necessary mental processes of an academic problem are infinitely more difficult to follow in the minds of children than those of a handwork problem. A teacher of one of the industrial arts can readily discover if her instructions have been misunderstood by the imperfections in the work produced by the child. Not so easy is it to detect a mistake in an academic subject. Or, to put it from the standpoint of the learner—a child can much more readily appreciate his mistake in carpentry, printing, clay work, sewing, cooking, etc., than he can in an academic subject. The right solution of an arithmetical problem, or the reason for a correct grammatical expression require a much more subtle perception and appreciation upon the part of the pupil; and hence, more patient efforts on the part of the teacher. I maintain that in academic study individual attention is more necessary than in any other; and that if we must have the old-fashioned subject curriculum, it is the academic teacher that needs the smaller membership; or, at least, as small a membership as the industrial arts teacher enjoys.

But to return to Mr. Sexson's discussion: his closing remarks should be carefully noted by every one interested in progressive education, for they were addressed particularly to progressive educators and those interested in that type of education. He maintained that it was up to us to put across to school boards, teachers, and the taxpayers our ideals in education if we wished to get them adopted in the schools. He said we must sell our ideas as Horace Mann a hundred years ago sold his of a free public school system to the people of Massachusetts and New England.

Horace Mann's ideal has become one of this country's greatest, if not the greatest, practical asset today. Let us hope that the adoption of the progressive educational ideal of today may be our next great forward stride. To bring this to pass as speedily as possible, we must create a public opinion for our ideal. In other words, we must make of ourselves high-class, modern salesmen, so filled with our subject, so convinced of its value to humanity, that we shall leave no stone unturned to convince others of its value and necessity as a force for the improvement of mankind, in order that this world may be a better stage upon which the drama of human evolution may proceed with greater understanding and joy.

The subject for Friday evening was: **Two Essentials in Progressive Education.** One of these essentials—**Education for Leisure**—was discussed by Mr. Edward Yoemans, whom many will remember as the author of that thot-provoking little book, first published in 1921, entitled "SHACKLED YOUTH." And since then he has been very largely responsible for the founding of that excellent progressive school in California, known as the Ojai Valley School. It is to be hoped that Mr. Yoemans will have his paper on "Education for Leisure" published, so that his ideas may have a wide circulation; for the subject is one that is becoming more and more vital, as our hours of work to earn a living decrease and our leisure hours correspondingly increase. How we spend our leisure time is an excellent indicator of our stage of culture.

Discussing **The Crisis in Culture,** in a series of articles under the larger title of "Individualism, Old and New," which recently appeared in THE NEW REPUBLIC magazine, John Dewey makes some pertinent remarks on the results of our educational methods and consequent state of culture. He says: "Education—in the broad sense of formation of fundamental attitudes of imagination, desire and thinking—is strictly correlative with culture in its inclusive social sense.

"No nation has ever been so actively committed to universal schooling as are the people of the United States. But what is our system for? What ends does it serve? That it gives opportunity

to many who would otherwise lack it is undeniable. It is also the agency for important welding and fusing processes. These are conditions of mind that will constitute a distinctive type of culture. But they are conditions only. If our public school system merely turns out efficient industrial fodder and citizenship fodder in a state controlled by pecuniary industry, as other schools in other nations have turned out efficient cannon fodder, it is not helping to solve the problem of building up a distinctive American culture; it is only aggravating the problem. That which prevents the schools from doing their educational work freely is precisely the pressure—for the most part indirect, to be sure—of domination by the money motif of our economic regime.

"The distinguishing trait of the American student body in our higher schools is a kind of intellectual immaturity . . . The immaturity nurtured in schools is carried over into life. If we Americans manifest, as compared with those of other countries who have had the benefits of higher schooling, a kind of infantilism it is because our own schooling so largely evades serious consideration of the deeper issues of social life; for it is only thru induction into the realities that mind can be matured."

Altho Dr. Dewey discusses in this series of articles present day economic and industrial tendencies and hence his remarks on education and culture are intimately woven into his argument on that special theme, and altho he seems to refer to the higher departments of education, nevertheless what he says is equally applicable to the lower, even to the elementary school. For particularly there the child's "induction into realities"—real life situations and problems commensurate with his understanding—creates the foundation for a maturer mentality in the high school and college than is obtained at present.

The second speaker for Friday evening was Mrs. Beatrice Ensor, well known to many readers of this pamphlet as the organizer of the New Educational Fellowship, the progressive educational organization of Europe. Mrs. Ensor is also the editor of the NEW

ERA magazine for the Fellowship. Her subject was: **Education for World Peace.** She gave a very stirring address, but it was somewhat difficult to hear her distinctly, as well as the previous speaker, either because of the size of the hall or a fault in the acoustic arrangements, hence notes were impossible. Educating for world peace is to be taken for granted as one of the aims of the progressive method of education. Of what avail would a new type of education be if it did not further a more perfect understanding between individuals, classes, nations, races, a more sympathetc attitude toward all beings? No conditions that generate war can exist side by side with true understanding and sympathy for others.

The general meeting that closed the Conference was held on Saturday morning. It was devoted to a discussion, in which all participated, of the question, **"Along what lines should experimentation and discussion be directed the coming year?"** This took place under the leadership of the well-known educator, Dr. Frank McMurry, Emeritus Professor of Teachers' College, Columbia University, New York City. Dr. McMurry presented all who attended the session with a list of topics that formed the basis for discussion. Some of the topics were:

1. Radical changes are going on in Education amounting to a revolution.
2. The most significant advance is the provision for motive on the part of children.
3. Two very vital questions are receiving widely different answers:
   (a) How much freedom in discipline shall the child enjoy?
   (b) How much freedom in studies?
4. Inhibition, obedience—including, at times, blind obedience—are still vital factors in Educaton.
5. A carefully prepared curriculum in advance of instruction is as necessary now as it ever was.
6. In the first three grades the old arrangement of independent studies—Reading, Writing, Spelling, and Number—may well be abandoned.
   In their place there should be "units of subject matter,' in which activities have the lead and furnish both motive and material for the formal subjects.
7. Occasional achievement tests in both the activities and the formal subjects involving skills are necessary as a means of judging results.
8. Beyond the third grade this kind of curriculum is difficult. But the same conception of one is feasible in the fourth, fifth and sixth grades.
9. It is doubtful if this kind of curriculum can be realized in the Junior and Senior High Schools.
10. On the other hand, the subiect matter in high school studies should be greatly humanized or socialized, and organized into "units."
    This is now going on, and reports of progress should be expected at each of these yearly meetings.

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A close study of these ten topics will reveal Prof. McMurry's attitude toward progressive education. He belongs to the old school of educators, tho he is aware of the desirability for certain changes. Indeed he is the author of geographies published in recent years, in which the human aspect of the subject is given greater emphasis and thus brot more to the level of a child's comprehension and interest.

Many took part in the discussion from the floor of the hall, including such well-known progressive educators as Dr. Junius Meriam and Mrs. Marietta Johnson. But, it seemed to me that the remarks of progressive educators received scant sympathy from the leader on the platform. It is very difficult for a certain type of mind, or, shall we say, for a mind that has become inured to certain methods over many years of practice, to make any radical change in its viewpoint. To such a mind, the new, the more ideal, is so apt to lead to confusion and chaos. The hope of the Progressive Education Movement to have its ideals adopted and put into practical realization lies with the younger generation of teachers and leaders, who in one way or another have been influenced by the pioneers of the Movement during the past generation, pioneers like those mentioned in section III of this pamphlet.

IN EDUCATION

II.

AN EXPERIMENT IN EDUCATION

During the three days' session of the Conference, opportunity was given to those attending to visit schools. Being particularly interested in the experiment of teaching in segregated classes certain children of high I. Q.'s (those who are at least two years mentally ahead of their chronological age) I spent a morning visiting the Grant School, where these children of special ability were being taught in three groups of two grades each, thus preparing them for the Junior High School. I found each class limited to the very desirable small membership, which should be customary in all schoolrooms, and placed in just those life-and-learning situations which progressive educators maintain all children should enjoy.

In the two lowest grades, the little ones were developing a farm (on a small scale, of course) out in their school yard. They were actually raising vegetables, selling them, and keeping account of their sales, as well as of their expenses to carry on the enterprise. They were raising chickens and rabbits. Their reading, writing and arithmetic were based on these and other activities, incidental to them, not goals in themselves. In the next two grades other projects were going on—preparing freshly-shorn wool for weaving, the process of weaving, etc. In music the class was developing the scale with drinking glasses, filling them to different heights with water until they harmonized in pitch, when struck, with the notes of a musical instrument. In the upper group various means of transportation, both primitive and modern, were being studied by means of a large sand table, clay, sand, rocks, and other forms of earth, as well as mechanical toys, useful in the project.

It was a pleasure to watch those children at work, free and spontaneous in their movements, interested in their work, hence the need for imposed discipline at a minimum, for their interests kept them,

unconsciously to be sure, but none the less effectively, self-disciplined. The query addressed to one of these teachers, "Are not the other teachers envious of your opportunity?" brot forth the reply, "Oh, no! they think this is a messy way of teaching!" Yet there seemed to be no real disorder in her room—only a well-equipped workshop schoolroom, where the necessary activities of the children would quite naturally cause supplies and tools to be lying about, not stowed away on shelves, nor in desks, for there were no desks in these rooms.

The attitude revealed in the phrase "a messy way of teaching," is held by many teachers towards this new method. It is the result of their inbreeding in the old system, whose customs and habits are so much more comfortable, even tho uninteresting and humdrum. I am reminded of the old form of discipline so common a generation or more ago, but now happily disappearing, which produced, as some one described it, a graveyard silence and order. A vivid memory haunts my mind of such a room in a public school, dating back only ten years or less. One felt like apologizing for the disturbance when entering it in the pursuit of duty, and pitied the errand boy sent by the principal with a message for the teachers, when, with halting steps, he approached that door, for the slightest noise on entering would bring him a rebuke and the command to "Try it over, and with less noise!"

It is necessary to understand that the fundamental attitudes which children gain, either under the more ideal conditions of a progressive schoolroom or under the more or less repressive conditions of the orthodox type—attitudes toward work and play, toward their companions or playmates, toward the teacher, their study and books —are the conditions which determine their behavior in childhood and adulthood, for such attitudes are likely to carry over into maturer years. The attitudes developed under the more ideal conditions are known to produce fine, self-controlled characters. On the other hand, it is also known by those who have studied deeply into the causes of juvenile delinquency that the old type of school discipline, just described, tended to produce embryonic criminals. The

teacher of the schoolroom of ten years ago, just referred to, complained bitterly that she always got such hoodlums of boys, for almost invariably during their year's sojourn with her a gang of them would throw stones after school hours at her third floor schoolroom windows, or hoot after her on her way home from school, or smoke cigarettes in the alley or some empty hallway. It never occurred to her to connect such misbehavior with the true cause—her wrong type of discipline and education. Aside from the fact that certain types of personalities have no business to be teaching, it is also true that the orthodox system, with its artificial standards, methods and conditions, tends to breed this type of discipline, to which the unwary teacher falls a victim, as well as the child.

Before leaving the subject of these special rooms for children of special ability, some consequences connected with this experiment should be mentioned. I asked if these children did not become egotistic to be singled out in this way. I was assured that they did not; on the contrary, they were now put upon their mettle and had to work for the first time in their young lives to keep up with their class. So far, so good. But how about the attitude they might be developing towards less fortunate children whom nature or heredity had not endowed with so high an I. Q.? May the extension of this experiment to all exceptional children not develop an intellectual snobbery amongst us quite subversive to our national ideal? May it not breed a caste system of the intellect far more intolerable in our setting than any oriental caste system? It is well to consider such a possible result, which would take a generation or two to make itself evident, and no doubt many more to eradicate, once it had taken root by such a publicly approved method of propagation.

If these special rooms for the mentally-highly-endowed children were a mere public school experiment to prove what is the best method of developing intelligence, and that being proved, this same opportunity were given to all children, then well and good; the experiment were worth while. But one must call attention to the fact that the experiment has been tried with excellent results by the various progressive schools in the country, that have existed for years for

that very purpose. The results need no longer be doubted. But if the experiment be but an opening wedge for that determinism in education against which Prof. Wm. C. Bagley of Teachers' College, Columbia University, has warned us, then we may well pause and consider.

It is quite evident that Nature does not separate the highly from the lowly endowed in her school of life. Parents of high I. Q.'s sometimes give birth to sub-normals. In the same family of children the moron or idiot appears with normal or super-normal brothers and sisters. In adult work and play we associate with all grades of intelligence above those in need of institutional care. If we would get on harmoniously with these associates, we must understand and sympathize with them, be they dullards or geniuses. The right kind of schoolroom reproduces learning situations that are true to life outside the schoolroom, even the condition of associating and working with mentalities of various grades of evolution, excluding the sub-normal that require special care. In such an environment pupils may learn to solve those inevitable and poignant problems of personality contact that will confront them in adult life, problems whose proper solution is as important, if not more so, than problems in arithmetic for the successful pursuit of a career in any avenue of activity. And if it be true, as Dr. Terman of Stanford University suggests, that from these highly endowed mental children probably will come the future leaders of our social, economic and political life, then they especially need this contact with all types of public school children; it would be a very necessary part of their training for leadership.

But let us look at this problem of segregation from another point of view. In reality, it is the slow or average mentality child that needs the new type of schoolroom most. It has been said that "an outstanding criticism of the curricula of both our elementary schools and our high schools is that they are adapted to the abilities of the brighter children rather than to those of the average child." If that be true, and my own experience in the public schools confirms the statement, and if we must separate the very bright from the rest,

then let the very bright have the old-fashioned type of education, with its academic curriculum and its large class membership, in which conditions they can compete with each other to their hearts' content; and perhaps the more there are in the room, the merrier. And let the slow ones have the individual attention possible in the small class membership, and the kind of education they require—those learning situations in which the solution of true-to-life problems will teach them how to think.

We should realize that our very bright children run the danger of becoming lack-a-daisical or indifferent, or of being neglected in the ordinary type of schoolroom, only because the conscientious teacher has to go slowly for the sake of the less bright, in order to bring them up to the required artificial standards. Under a progressive regime, the ideals and methods employed will take care of both the super-normal and normal learner, and of even the slow one, provided he be not sub-normal. One simply does not expect the same achievement from all. And the super-normal, because of the greater intelligence he brings to bear upon the common problem being solved by the class, can often kindle the fire of understanding in the slower mind, just because of some common bond of sympathy —some common interest, some form of activity in which they are either on an equal footing, or the slow one (mentally) may be the other's superior. Let us, by all means, have this more natural type of schoolroom, lately started at public expense for these more favored children, but let us open its doors to the stupid as well as the very bright and for all grades between, just as we have opened our schools to rich and poor alike. That is true democracy in education, giving equal opportunity to all.

PROGRESSIVE STEPS

III.

PROGRESSIVE EDUCATORS

The modern progressive movement in education practically began with Col. Francis W. Parker who, at his County Normal School, then in a suburb of Chicago, Ill., put into practice certain ideals in education which were a radical departure from traditional methods and aims. His school later became absorbed into the Chicago School System as that city increased its boundaries, the Colonel, however, continuing as its head until his death in the early years of this century. Many of the present progressive educators had their training under him; and some of his most representative teachers, like Flora Cooke, principal of the Chicago Francis Parker School, and Mrs. Gudrun Thorne-Thomsen, principal of the Ojai Valley School, have been in their turn the inspirers of a younger generation of teachers.

Col. Parker believed in motivating a child in his school work, not with the teacher's nor an adult motive imposed upon him from without, but a motive indigenous, so to say, to the child's own subjective desires, groping to find an outlet in some form of expression. His school was the first in the country to offer manual training (sloyd) to its pupils. He brot his students into intimate touch with nature thru field study and first-hand observation. In those early days, all of this was a real innovation, as compared with the dry-as-dust Three R curriculum, with its mere rote learning of history, grammar, and geography textbooks.

Overlapping Col. Parker's period and continuing on into the present century came John Dewey with his experimental school, connected with the School of Education of the University of Chicago during the first decade of this century, followed by his work at Teachers' College, Columbia University. And, altho Dr. Dewey is now identified with the department of philosophy at Columbia, nevertheless the Dewey ideals are being most ably "put across" each year to hundreds of students at Teachers' College by his colleague, Dr. W. H. Kilpatrick. According to those ideals the child's school

life should be an integral part of his total experience as a child in the larger community outside of the schoolroom, i. e., the schoolroom should offer to the child as natural an environment for learning and growth as the best of homes provide.

Furthermore, "the business of the educator—whether parent or teacher—is to see to it that the greatest possible number of ideas acquired by children and youth are acquired in such a vital way that they become **moving** ideas, motive forces in the guidance of conduct. This demand and this opportunity make the moral purpose universal and dominant in all instruction." Hence, the teaching that the attitudes developed by children in any learning process are a very important result of that learning. Attitudes represent the habitual emotional reaction within the child to any learning experience, which reaction sooner or later modifies his behavior; as, for instance, the wrong attitude developed by the boys in the room of the strict disciplinarian of a decade ago, mentioned on a previous page, which tended to make them hoodlums.

Perhaps the most important contribution made by Dr. Dewey to the progressive ideals of today is that children can learn to think for themselves only thru first-hand experience. Such experience has its proper dynamic effect upon the subjective emotional life of the child; he learns to associate what he has done with what he feels, and thus begins to think. Quoting from Dewey's DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION: "The initial stage of that developing experience, which is called thinking, is **experience**. . . . What is here insisted upon is the necessity of an actual empirical situation as the initiating phase of thot. Experience is here taken as: trying to do something and having the thing perceptibly do something to one in return."

Thinking in schools is too often regarded, he says, as "something cut off from experience, and capable of being cultivated in isolation. . . . The fallacy consists in supposing that we can begin with ready-made subject matter of arithmetic or geography . . . irrespective of some direct personal experience of a situation. . . . The first approach to any subject in school, if thot is to be aroused, and not

words acquired, should be as unscholastic as possible. To realize what an experience, or empirical situation, means we have to call to mind the sort of situation that presents itself outside of school; the sort of occupations that interest and engage activity in ordinary life. Careful inspection of methods which are permanently successful in formal education, whether in arithmetic or learning to read, or studying geography, or learning physics or a foreign language, will reveal that they depend for their efficiency upon the fact that they go back to the type of situation which causes reflection out of school in ordinary life. They give the pupil something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking, or the intentional noting of connections; learning naturally results."

Mrs. Marietta Johnson was forced into educational reform not so much from the psychological approach, as Dr. Dewey seemed to be, as from years of first-hand experience in a large public school system (Minnesota, I believe) and the consequent realization that there was something decidedly wrong in its aims and methods. She maintains that education should prolong the period of childhood in order that there may be time to give to "every child the best opportunity for the fullest development, the most complete realization." True education means growth; and the plasticity of childhood years (the years before one becomes of age) is the very necessary condition that guarantees the complete and harmonious growth of the whole organism—physical, emotional, mental—thus ensuring a well-developed individual at maturity. Each stage of unfoldment, according to Mrs. Johnson, must be lived as completely, as happily, as harmoniously as possible, if the next stage is to be lived in the same more perfect way. Our school years should, therefore, not be primarily a preparation for the next period of life or schooling, for that policy inevitably results in the imposition of the standards and requirements of the more adult period upon the previous stage. Each stage has its own interests, its own ways of self-expression, its own needs.

It is, therefore, the business of the educator so to study the child as to know what are its needs and supply the necessary learning

situations for the satisfaction of those needs, thus promoting healthy and happy growth. Our fixed academic standards for each period, imposed from above (according to the needs of the next stage), to which standards all children must attain before they can pass on to the next stage in their school life; our marking system, etc.—all such usages that now obtain in our schools do not minister to the organic needs of the child, i. e., the needs of a growing organism. In Mrs. Johnson's estimation, to fail a child is bad psychology. She says: "The promise of a better mankind constitutes the problem of education. Education must change its point of view. It must cease to look only for material results. Knowledge and skill are the material ends in education, but health and joy and poise, confidence and power, are the primary human ends. . . . Every problem which now confronts civilization will be solved eventually only by education."

Dr. Junius Meriam is another educator who has made important contributions to progressive ideals and methods. During the second decade of this century he was at the head of the educational department of the State University of Missouri and conducted in connection therewith an experimental school in elementary education. His awakening to the need for change in educational procedure dates back to a time when a certain promising pupil in a high school class, in which he taught Latin, mathematics, English grammar and history under the customary school policy of "hard work and vigorous drill," began to lose interest in his work. By accident he discovered that the boy had become the leader of a tough gang in the village. Quoting from the preface of Dr. Meriam's book, "Explanation of the changed attitude of my favorite student was now clear. The usual play at recess had not provided the needed activity. The serious school studies had not given the boy opportunity for invention, self-direction, genuine inquiry into real life. This he craved and the gang became his more effective school." And, henceforth, Dr. Meriam's problem was, as it should be for all teachers, "How can I help these boys and girls to do better in all those wholesome activities in which they normally engage?" His book, CHILD LIFE AND THE CURRICULUM, presents his solution to the problem.

PROGRESSIVE STEPS

Visiting his school at Columbia, Missouri, some thirteen years ago, I found the children active in field excursions for observation, or an excursion to some industry not too far away. They played games, were reading, or listening to a story, or busy in some creative or applied art work, in music, in dancing, or finishing some paper for their portfolio. During these normal activities and in connection with them, they learned to read and write and do arithmetic; they gained a knowledge of geography, of history and other formal subjects, altho these subjects were not mentioned in the daily program. They were incidental, tho not accidental, to the natural activities that normal children engage in when left to themselves. The teachers merely gave direction to their natural pursuits. No homework harassed the minds and hearts of these children after school hours; they were expected to read good books, which they would later report on and discuss in class.

If one were to epitomize Dr. Meriam's contribution to the Cause, one might say he has suggested a reform of the curriculum, restating it in terms of children's natural activities. He says in the conclusion of his book, whose title is significant of his problem: "I have sought to center attention upon the content of the curriculum, rather than upon the questions of method and management, which seem to me quite subordinate to those of the curriculum. The Three R's, by their very nature, are ill adapted to the needs of an evolutionary society. Social and industrial life is changing rapidly and the demand is insistent that schoolroom employment—the curriculum—be more immediately related to the vocational and leisure activities of the community. . . . The child must become acquainted with his environment and learn to work. Vocational guidance is found best in industrial intelligence and work aptitudes. He must develop an appreciation of play and acquire an ability to spend well the leisure time that current civilization provides."

Other contributions to the general reform movement in education have been made since the beginning of this century, but the limits of this pamphlet forbid any extended reference to them. And since

this pamphlet discusses only America's share in the development of Progressive Education, Mdme. Montessori's ideals are not discussed here. Emphasis upon play as an important learning situation has been given by some of our educators. Other experiments largely center around the problem of individual progress in mastering skills and gaining information in order to allow a slow child the necessary time to acquire these tools of the mind, and facts, while a bright child may go as fast as he pleases. This breaking of the lockstep in education was first tried out by Frederick Burk at the California State Teachers' College in San Francisco. Its reform was largely one of technique—the preparation of the materials of instruction in the form of individual booklets, so that with these in his hands each pupil, with such help from the teacher as he needed, could master the contents as fast as his native talent permitted.

Carleton Washburne has adapted this idea in his management of the public schools of Winnetka, Ill., which experiment is attracting wide attention. The claim is, that if well organized, such a method of individual progress in the necessary informational and skill learnings allows more time during the day for socialized group work in creative and constructive activities. Whether the advocates of this reform wish it to be so or not, one must admit that it continues to put the emphasis upon a kind of learning which certain of our foremost progressive educators prefer not to put into such a prominent position in their educational scheme. Skill in the formal type of learning, in technique, in specialized modes of mental expression, such as the Three R's, are of minor importance in a child's life, becoming more useful only as the child approaches adolescence. Hence, a much greater period could be allowed for the acquisition of such skills, while stress should be placed in elementary school life upon learnings more vital to the child—appreciations, the gaining of ideals, the development of their creative powers, desire for self-mastery and control in conduct, the development of certain fundamental character traits, that too often are neglected because the other type of learning is so stressed. The Dalton plan is also an individual method in learning, adapted to older pupils and students, and

to more formal academic subjects. So far as the younger pupils are concerned, it is open to the same criticism. I believe I am right when I say that true progressive ideals in method always center around the group and the individual learning and growth that are gained thru group work. Individual help must be given and can be given in a well-organized school, carrying out progressive ideals, but the learnings acquired thru group work is paramount in importance.

IV.

THE MEANING OF PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION

The meaning of progressive education is not clear in the minds of many who have not followed the Movement closely for the last decade or two. In fact, the name itself—Progressive Education—is in a sense enigmatical. The word **progressive** is perhaps more applicable to the Movement as a whole, in that it is in favor of educational progress away from outworn, traditional ideals and methods of learning that do not keep pace with the ideals held by an awakening self-consciousness in humanity. In time, the word **progressive** came to be applied to the educational ideals of the Movement and, altho the concept of these ideals is much richer than any one qualifying word could express, the idea that **progressive education** is edutional progress away from outworn, traditional ideals and methods would not be misleading. The old type of learning is more fitted for a static society, a humanity that is non-evolving. It does not further the very purpose of education as it is now conceived by some, viz., to promote the progress of humanity on its evolutionary path toward self-conscious perfection.

It has been said that in the creatures below the human type, there is a perfection manifested—a more perfect fulfillment of the life

purpose in each and a more perfect adaptation to their environment —far greater than that in man, but they are unconscious of their perfection. On the other hand human beings, specially those more advanced in evolution, are most conscious of imperfections, implying that they have a growing inner sense of perfection to which they have not yet attained. And therefore, it is our aim, as human beings to achieve self-consciously the ideal of perfection we cherish. Education should further that aim, so that we may attain more swiftly and with as much joy as possible and an ever-increasing power and sense of achievement.

A brief statement of the ideals of progressive education, which to some extent will be a summing up of what has been presented in this pamphlet, may be a fitting close thereto. In order to give as clear and complete a concept of these ideals as possible, I shall define them in terms of aims, methods, and curriculum.

AIMS

The progressive educator aims so to educate the child that:

1. He will live his child life as completely and happily as possible.

2. He will be a healthy, integrated personality when he reaches maturity, which means that not only his physical health as a growing child will receive proper attention, but also his mental and emotional health.

3. He will develop a well-rounded character, self-disciplined and self-controlled.

4. He will gain, thru first-hand experience, a growing understanding of his own capacities and powers (hence, also of his limitations) in order that he may find his place in the world of work easily and fill it acceptably.

5. He will be inspired to do his part to make the world a better place for human habitation and progress, i. e., he will be a practical idealist.

PROGRESSIVE STEPS

METHODS

Progressive methods of instruction and discipline are such that:

1. Nature's plan of development for each individual child shall not be violated, otherwise harm may be done to the growing organism which may never be eradicated. There are certain broad, general principles that govern the development of the human organism which are well known to the properly trained educator. But there are often exceptions to be made to suit the peculiar needs of individual children, and these individual modifications must also be respected. Hence, no forcing processes will be employed to achieve artificial standards.

2. The natural and instinctive impulses to action of a child are not suppressed, but the child is helped to attain an increasing self-mastery over his lower nature, over those tendencies and instincts that prevent him from being a self-controlled and harmonious member of any group in which he finds himself for work or play.

3. An appreciation of that which he is to master shall first be acquired by the child.

4. Latent powers of creative activity will be released in order that the individual may learn to know himself more completely.

5. The plasticity of childhood is maintained as long as possible —plasticity of body, of emotions, of mind. The greatest foe to individual progress and growth is the tendency in the organism to crystallize, to become set in habits—both subjective as well as objective. A minimum of good habits for the sake of physical and mental hygiene and a growing capacity for self-help and direction are necessary, but the expressions of life of the growing child should be kept as fluidic as possible during his years of schooling. All specialized expressions of skill and knowledge tend toward crystallization.

6. The joy of life, of growth and achievement, shall be realized more abundantly, both by the child, and hence later the adult.

7. The child may become a true THINKER.

IN EDUCATION

CURRICULUM

"Education is the continuous reconstruction of life to ever higher and richer levels. This is the definition of education for the new curriculum."—W. H. Kilpatrick.

In a progressive school, the curriculum as part of the "educative process," is an exceedingly fluidic affair as to form, tho not as to essential content. Dr. Hockett's definition of such a curriculum, quoted near the beginning of this pamphlet, is a good illustration of its non-crystallized nature, viz., that it is a success of meaningfull and wholesome experiences. There is here no intimation of what textbooks to use, nor how many pages to learn in a given time. And yet for the information of the teacher, such a curriculum might enumerate the skills and cultural values that are desirable and toward which the teacher may aim. But no set standards of mastery will be outlined for all children; for standards of informational or knowledge acquisition, or the mastery of a skill, such as learning any of the Three R's, too often mean the need of drill, drill, drill, till pupils and teacher alike are weary with disgust, a type of learning that defeats the most important purpose of "learning of the right kind," which according to Prof. Kilpatrick, "helps one to live better." A certain amount of practice is necessary for mastery, but the child himself must see the necessity for it and enter into it wholeheartedly.

To illustrate the latter situation with an actual occurrence: a certain intermediate class of a progressive private school was making an imaginary trip around the world, employing time tables, sand table, maps, pictures, everything that would make the trip realistic and enjoyable. During a certain stage of the trip, there occurred a discussion of the average speed of steamship, railroad and airplane, and long division was necessary to understand that aspect of the journey. Instructions were given and the problems worked, but the skill was not mastered in one or two lessons. However, to the surprise of the teacher, her pupils clamored for more long division for several days, until the majority were satisfied that they had mastered it. There were two or three whose minds were still hazy on the sub-

ject; but they, too, were glad to pass on to the next stage of the journey. And the teacher knew that other opportunities would come when they could gain added experience in the skill.

Let me, in closing, quote at length, in regard to the curriculum, a statement made by Dr. Kilpatrick: "Learning is never single. We cannot start a child to working at any one thing and suppose that he learns just that one thing. The facts are quite otherwise. While a child is memorizing a poem, for example, he is building—and of necessity must build—attitudes, favorable or unfavorable, toward the particular poem, toward poetry in general, toward teacher, toward the teacher's way of managing, toward school, toward his own future education, toward matters of the intellect in general. He is learning, well or ill, positively or negatively, to cooperate with his fellows in respect to teacher and in respect to law and order in general. In like manner while he is studying 'composition,' he is learning not only about margins and punctuation and the like. He is at the same time building in himself attitudes which will help to determine whether in the future he will or will not use proper margins or punctuation, will or will not write neatly and accurately, will or will not write at all beyond the barest minimum of social or business compulsion.

"To teach composition or a poem without considering these inevitable attendant learnings is little, if any, short of criminal. Incalculable harm may easily be done. The ordinary course of study states the content of the curriculum as if some of the outcomes (skills and knowledge) could be got separately from the rest (habits, attitudes, and appreciations). This is impossible. The habits and attitudes will always come along with the others, but they may be bad. Come they will, the only question is in what form they will come. Since the skills and knowledge can be tested (even better nowadays by standard tests), the teachers are often judged by them and so, to please the authorities, teachers are often practically forced to damage their pupils by working for what can be tested in a way to hurt what cannot be tested. The situation is serious. The remedy seems to be two-fold: first, give real leeway as to the time requirements for

desirable facts and skills; then work for all the outcomes together, noting that the habits and attitudes are, in the long run, the most important. This again means an experience curriculum. Attendant learnings are inevitable. Only in a curriculum of actual vital experiences can these accompanying learnings be adequately cared for."

* * * * *

You, reader of this pamphlet, if its argument has appealed to you and you believe in the ideals outlined herein, will you not help to spread a knowledge of these ideals, either by talking about them to those who should be interested, or by passing on this pamphlet to some one that may be benefitted? Possibly you may be able to help by distributing more copies, which may be had at practically cost price.

As one of the speakers at the Conference, quoted on a previous page, advised, we must sell our ideas to those most concerned—to boards of education, to teachers, to parents. We must create a public opinion in favor of our ideal. Remember, the hope of a more ideal world, a future better than the past has been, rests with the proper education of our children.

The distribution of this pamphlet as widely as possible will help toward that consummation.

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